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bona terra comedetis, et aeterna procul dubio fruemini vita. Sin autem, quod non credimus, et aliquam posueritis moram, aut ad inventionem minime velociter hanc nostram adimplendam adhortationem, ad liberandam hanc meam civitatem Romanam, et populum in ea commorantem, et sanctam Dei apostolicam ecclesiam a Domino mihi commissam, simul et ejus praesullem; scias vos ex auctoritate sanctae et unicæ Trinitatis per gratiam apostolatus, quæ data est mihi a Christo Domino, vos alienari pro transgressione nostre adhortationis a regno Dei, et vita eterna. Sed Deus et Dominus noster Jesus Christus, qui nos suo precioso sanguine redimens, ad lucem perduxit veritatis, nos quoque predicatorum et illuminatores totius mundi constituit, det vobis ea sapere et intelligere, eaque disponere nimis velociter; ut celerius hanc civitatem Romanam et ejus populum, seu sanctam Dei Ecclesiam mihi a Deo commissam ad eruendum occurras, quatenus misericorditer, sicut fidelibus sue potentie, meis pro vobis interventibus suffragii, et in presenti vita longevos, sospites, et victores conservare jubeat, et venturo in saeculo dona sue remuneracionis faciat multiplicius promereri cum sanctis et electis suis. Bene Valete."—*Labbe and Coss., Con. Gen. Vol. vi. 1639.*

### Correspondence.

#### TRUE EPISTLES OF ST. PETER.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE CATHOLIC LAYMAN.

SIR.—It is, I think, about two years ago, that in your columns I asked your correspondent, Mr. Rourke, if he would be kind enough to prove to me the peculiar doctrines of the Church of Rome from the inspired epistles of St. Peter, corroborating his assertions and inferences by references to other parts of the sacred Scriptures. Mr. Rourke intimated that he would comply with this request.

I need hardly say that by "peculiar doctrines of the Church of Rome," I mean such as Transubstantiation, Invocation of Saints, Priestly confession, and Absolution; Celibacy of the Clergy; the articles of belief established by the Council of Trent, embodied in the creed of Pope Pius IV.; and to these I will now add, what has since been promulgated as an article of faith, necessary to be believed for salvation, the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of her who is blessed among women, the Virgin Mary, mother of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I am sorry that, not having the CATHOLIC LAYMAN to refer to at present, I cannot give the date of my request, nor of Mr. Rourke's promise; it will, however, I hope, be sufficient to remind him of them, and I trust that he will now undertake what ought, according to his views, to be an easy task, so far as he may find the Word of God for a foundation. Of course, I expect him to confine himself to that, on the apostolic precept, "that other foundation can no man lay."—I am, Sir, yours, &c.

"A."

#### A WORD ABOUT ORIGEN AND CELSUS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE CATHOLIC LAYMAN.

SIR.—Do you not know that when Origen says "that he offered his prayers to God above all and through Christ," that he said what we Catholics say now? but you won't say that St. Paul was doing wrong when he asked the prayers of his fellow-creatures on earth. In the same way we ask the prayers of the angels and saints, who are in more favour with God than sinners. So did Origen, but the great Origen would not hear of the angels [devils] that Celsus meant.

I am, Sir, your obedient,

W. B.

W. B. here maintains that it was Origen's opinion that although *prayers* ought to be offered to God alone, still we might lawfully ask for the *intercession* of saints and angels. W. B. must have arrived at this conclusion merely because he knows that Origen *ought* to have thought so, if the doctrine of the Church in his time had been the same as that now held in the Church of Rome. But if W. B. had looked either into Origen's works, or into the extracts we gave from them, he would have found that Origen's opinion was very different.

Let W. B. look to the passage cited (CATHOLIC LAYMAN, p. 47), in which Origen is speaking not of devils, but of those angels, souls, and spirits who are friends of God. Origen teaches that if we desire the help or the intercession of such spirits, we must obtain it not by direct calling upon the angels, but by striving to make God our friend by the practice of piety and virtue. As the shadow follows the substance, so when we gain the friendship of God the friendship of his angels will follow, and when we pray to God they will pray with us *without being asked*. Origen tells us also (see p. 75), that it is unreasonable to call upon angels because we possess no knowledge concerning them or concerning the functions which each has to discharge; and that even if we had this knowledge, still it would not warrant us in offering our intercessions as well as our prayers in any way except to God through Christ.

W. B. asks, why should we not ask the intercession of saints and angels, when we may lawfully ask for the prayers of our brethren upon earth? We answer, in the first place, that whether we can explain the *why* or

not, the fact is that the Bible gives us every encouragement to pray for each other and to ask each other's prayers; but it never once, either by precept or example, gives us the smallest encouragement to ask for the prayers of a departed saint or of an angel. And the fact also is, that the primitive fathers, as we have just seen in Origen's case, though they ask for the intercession of their friends on earth, disapprove of asking for the prayers of saints or angels, and don't in their works set us any example of such prayers.

We may answer, in the second place, that we ask for the prayers of friends on earth because we have the means of communicating with them and making our wishes known to them. We do not offer prayers to saints or angels, because we have no knowledge that such petitions can reach the objects to whom they are addressed. It would be as unreasonable to do so as if we were to kneel down and ask living men, who were a thousand miles distant, to pray for us.

Thirdly—When we ask for the prayers of living men there is no danger of idolatry. When St. Paul asked his converts to give him this proof of their love, it was surely not that he thought they were in more favour with God than he was. The mutual prayers of Christians for each other do not turn any aside from direct calling on God, but rather stir them up to more earnest addresses to the Almighty.

It is very different when we ask for the prayers of a saint or an angel, who is supposed to be more in favour with God than we—so much in favour, in short, that his requests to God are *sure* to be heard. If we can secure the intercession of such a being, we have no occasion for direct addresses to God. That invisible Being to whom we come to make known our wants, and who we believe has always the power of relieving them, is, in fact, our God. It does not matter whether he relieves our wants by his own power or by obtaining the help of some higher divinity: if we can come to him always with confidence in his willingness to hear, and in his power to help, we need no other God.

The fact, then, that prayer for the intercession of saints and angels necessarily leads to idolatry sufficiently explains why the Scriptures and the early fathers never recommend or encourage it.

#### COLUMBANUS ON HOLY WELLS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE CATHOLIC LAYMAN.

SIR.—You have elicited so many recent testimonies as to the prevalent superstition in Ireland as to holy wells, that, perhaps, you may think the following extracts from Dr. Charles O'Conor's third letter on the Irish Church not unworthy of insertion in your paper.

When alluding to the well of St. Winefrid, in Wales, of which you published an amusing account in your 4th vol., page 110, Dr. O'Conor proceeds thus:

"And now, with regard to S. Winefrid, I solemnly protest that a word of disrespectful language towards the person called S. Winefrid never escaped my lips. I recollect, indeed, that when the Bishop of Castabala (Dr. Milner) published his miraculous pamphlet, on the wonderful cures performed at the well in Flintshire, commonly called S. Winefrid's, I complained to the good bishop of the London district, that false miracles had always been a source of infidelity; that Catholics ought to be particularly cautious how they countenanced superstitious practices; that *well worshipping* was a Druidic superstition; that Doctor Milner was quite ignorant of the pagan practices which yet remain in the mountainous parts of Ireland and Wales, and that he was coming forward, in the 19th century, to canonise Druidism, and mix it up with the doctrines of Christianity."

Doctor Linden, who examined the waters of S. Winefrid's, proves that their medicinal qualities are beyond all dispute; and that their green and sweet scented moss is frequently applied to ulcerated wounds with signal success, which he ascribes very properly to a vegetating spirit in that water, which is clear of all gross earth and mineral contents. He also recommends it as a most powerful cold bath of the first rank; having in its favour a variety of authentic cures, worked upon the most stubborn and malignant diseases, such as leprosy, weakness of nerves, and other chronic inveterate disorders. The salutary effects of cold baths, commonly called *holy wells*, has been abundantly demonstrated to result from natural causes, and more particularly in regard to Holy Well, in Flintshire.<sup>b</sup>

"The truth is, that the medicinal qualities of these wells were known to the Druids, who were professed naturalists, as stated by Pliny; and, therefore, that in times of Druidism they were objects of veneration, as well as the oak, the upright unheaved stone, and the missettoe.

"That well-worship was a part of the Pagan system, which prevailed in Ireland before the introduction of Christianity, is clear from *Euvius*, or whoever was the author of the *Vita 7 ma S. Patricii*, which was certainly written before the invasion of Ireland by Henry II. He expressly states that the pagan Irish *adored fountains*

<sup>a</sup> Linden, on Chalybeat Waters, Lond. 1748, p. 126.

<sup>b</sup> Philon, Trans. n. 57, vol. 5, p. 1160—Bingley's North Wales. The supposed tincture of S. Winefrid's blood is a vegetable production, *Bysus Jolites*.

as *divinities*; and his authority is confirmed beyond all doubt by the evidence of Adamnan, an eye-witness, who wrote half a century before Bede, and mentions another Irish fountain, which the pagans of S. Columba's days adored as *divine*.

"I have often inquired of your tenants, what they themselves thought of their pilgrimages to the wells of Kill-Arach, Tobbar Brighde, Tobbar Muire, near Elphin, Moor, near Castlereagh, where multitudes annually assembled to celebrate what they, in broken English, termed *Patterns* (Patron's days); and when I pressed a very old man, Owen Hester, to state what possible advantage he expected to derive from the singular custom of frequenting in particular such wells as were contiguous to an old *blasted oak*, or an upright *unheaved stone*, and what the meaning was of the yet more singular custom of sticking *rags* on the branches of such trees, and spitting on them, his answer, and the answer of the oldest men, was that their ancestors always did it; that it was a preservative against *Geasa-Draioidecht*, i.e., the sorceries of Druids; that their cattle were preserved by it from infectious disorders; that the *daoiinti maithé*, i.e., the fairies, were kept in good *humour* by it, and so thoroughly persuaded were they of the sanctity of these pagan practices, that they would travel bare-headed and bare footed from ten to twenty miles for the purpose of crawling on their knees round these wells, and *upright stones*, and *oak trees* westward, as the sun travels, some three times, some six, some nine, and so on, in uneven numbers, until their voluntary penances were completely fulfilled. The waters of *Logh-Con* were deemed so sacred from ancient usage, that they would throw into the lake whole rolls of butter, as a preservative for the milk of their cows against *Geasa-Draioideacht*!"

"The same customs existed among the Irish colonies of the Highlands and Western Islands; and even in some parts of the Lowlands of Scotland. 'I have often observed,' says Mr. Brand, 'shreds, or bits of *rags*, upon the bushes that overhang a well in the road to Benton near Newcastle, which is called the *Rag-well*.' Mr. Pennant says, 'They visit the well of *Spye* in Scotland, for many distempers, and the well of *Drachaldy*, for as many, offering small pieces of money and bits of *rags*.'

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,  
VIATOR.

We feel obliged to *Viator* for recalling our attention to Dr. O'Conor's able work, and shall probably, at an early opportunity, give some further extracts from it, on the origin of *Irish Well-worship*.

#### COME, CRACK ME THIS NUT.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE CATHOLIC LAYMAN.

DEAR SIR,—I am a very little boy, and I am at school, and mamma sent me a nice bag of nuts, and the boys were very bold to me about them, and the master was very hard on me, and I said I would write to tell you, because you like fair play, and you will tell me if it's right; and I am sure you will take my part about the nuts.

I was sitting in the schoolroom with a great many little boys, and I was giving them nuts, and we were all cracking them, and the nuts were very good, and I was helping some of the little boys to crack them, because my teeth were stronger than theirs, and the more there was of us together, the more nuts we cracked; because, when a very hard nut came, if one could not crack it another could, and you never saw little boys so happy, and nobody spoke bad word, but we were all very good, and so were the nuts. But a very hard nut came, and I was crying out, "Come, crack me this nut;" and just at that minute some of the big boys came into the schoolroom, for there are a great many big boys at this school, who only stay at school because they are too silly to learn anything useful; so they stay at school till they are as big as men, and we call them "schoolmen," and not schoolboys. And when the "schoolmen" came they pulled my nuts away from me, and they said cracking nuts was not fit for little boys, and that little boys did not know how to crack them, so they would crack them for us; so a big boy got a stone and he held a nut on my head between his finger and thumb, and then he cracked the nut on my head with the stone, and he eat it himself, and said it was very good; and then all the big boys began to crack the nuts on the little boys' heads, but they only spoiled the nuts, for they mashed the kernels and greased and dirtied them, so that they were not fit to eat, and they cut our heads with the shells; and the little boys got none of the nuts, and the big boys were not a bit the better for them; and three big boys were cracking nuts on my head together, and I wished there never were any nuts at all, though I liked them so much just before, and I cried very much because I was hurt. And then the master came into the school when he heard me crying, and he got very angry, and he said nuts were not fit things for boys to have, because they might hurt themselves trying to open them, and he said he would whip all the little boys for crying; but he did not scold the big boys at all, though he saw the way they were cracking the nuts on our heads. But he took my bag of nuts, and said nobody should crack nuts in the school but himself, because nobody but a schoolmaster knew how to crack nuts; so then all the big boys cried out, like mean creatures, that nobody but a schoolmaster could crack nuts, although the idle fellows never did any-